

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A computer network system for managing the distribution of an article, the
5 system comprising:
an order accepting process accepting an order for the article from a purchaser;
and
a consideration determining process functionally coupled to the order accepting
process and determining a value added consideration due to a value added provider of
10 the article, based on information related to the accepted order.
2. The computer network system of claim 1 wherein the value added provider
comprises a licensee of the article.
- 15 3. The computer network system of claim 2 wherein the added value consideration
comprises a licensing royalty to be paid to a creator of the article.
4. The computer network system of claim 3 further comprising a membership
management processing system managing a set of members including the purchaser, and
20 wherein the set of members pays the value added consideration in accordance with a
predetermined value based on the information related to the accepted order.
5. The computer network system of claim 4 wherein the value added consideration
is paid to the value added provider upon the order of a predetermined number of articles

by the purchaser.

6. The computer network system of claim 5 wherein the information related to the accepted order comprises an article identifier, a number of articles purchased by the purchaser, and a manufacturing cost for the article.

7. The computer network system of claim 6 further comprising a stock management process associating the manufacturing cost of the article with the value added consideration, and wherein the value added provider bears the manufacturing cost of the article until the order accepting process accepts the order from the purchaser.

8. The computer network system of claim 7 wherein the article comprises a computer readable medium containing one or more programs executable by a computer.

9. A server computer coupled to a network system, the server computer programmed to manage the distribution of an article, and comprising:

an order accepting process accepting an order for the article from a purchaser;

and

a consideration determining process functionally coupled to the order accepting process and determining a value added consideration due to a value added provider of the article, based on information related to the accepted order.

10. The server computer of claim 9 wherein the added value consideration comprises a license royalty to be paid to a creator of the article.

11. The server computer of claim 10 further comprising a membership management processing system managing a set of members including the purchaser, and wherein the set of members pays the value added consideration in accordance with a predetermined value based on the information related to the accepted order.

12. The server computer of claim 11 wherein the value added consideration is paid to the value added provider upon the order of a predetermined number of articles by the purchaser.

13. The server computer of claim 12 wherein the information related to the accepted order comprises an article identifier, a number of articles purchased by the purchaser, and a manufacturing cost for the article.

14. The server computer of claim 13 further comprising a stock management process associating the manufacturing cost of the article with the value added consideration, and wherein the value added provider bears the manufacturing cost of the article until the order accepting process accepts the order from the purchaser.

15. The server computer of claim 14 wherein the article comprises a computer readable medium containing one or more programs executable by a computer.

16. A sales management system for articles each having a selling price determined in accordance with at least a manufacturing cost and added value, wherein

the sales management system includes a sales management server and a customer terminal;

said customer terminal has:

an order accepting unit for accepting input order information including at least identification information on an article desired by a purchaser and the number of articles desired by the purchaser; and

an output unit for transmitting the order information to said sales management server; and

said sales management server comprises:

a receiver unit for receiving the order information outputted from said output unit of said customer terminal; and

a consideration determination unit which determines a consideration to be paid to a creator of the added value in accordance with the contents of the order information received by said receiver unit.

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17. A sales management system according to claim 16, wherein said sales management server further comprises a consideration transmission unit for transmitting, to a computer of the added value creator, consideration information including at least the consideration to be paid to the added value creator.

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18. A sales management system according to claim 17, wherein said sales management server is linked at least to a computer for controlling delivery of the articles;

the order information further includes delivery-destination designating

information designating the destination of an ordered article; and

said sales management server further comprises:

a storage unit for storing customer information including at least one delivery-destination address including a customer's home address; and

5 a delivery instruction unit which determines a delivery-destination address by referring, based on the delivery-destination designating information, to the customer information, and which transmits, to the computer for controlling delivery, delivery-instruction information including at least identification information on the article desired by the purchaser and the number of articles desired by the purchaser, which are included
10 in the order information, and the delivery-destination address.

19. A sales management system according to claim 18, wherein

said sales management server is linked at least to a computer for controlling delivery of the articles;

15 the order information further includes delivery-destination designating information designating the destination of an ordered article; and

said sales management server further comprises:

a storage unit for storing customer information including at least one delivery-destination address including a customer's home address; and

20 a delivery instruction unit which determines a delivery-destination address by referring, based on the delivery-destination designating information, to the customer information, and which transmits, to the computer for controlling delivery, delivery-instruction information including at least identification information on the article desired by the purchaser and the number of articles desired by the purchaser, which are included

in the order information, and the delivery-destination address.

20. A sales management server for articles each having a selling price determined in accordance with at least a manufacturing cost and added value, said sales management
5 server comprising:

a receiver unit for receiving order information including at least article-
identification information and the number of articles to be purchased;

a consideration determination unit which determines a consideration to be paid to
a creator of the added value in accordance with the contents of the order information

10 after said receiver unit receives the order information; and

a consideration transmission unit for transmitting, to a computer at a site of the
added value creator, consideration information including at least the consideration to be
paid to the added value creator.

15 21. A sales management server according to claim 20, wherein
said articles are recording media on each of which a computer-readable program
is fixed; and

the added value creator is a person having the right to sell the program.

20 22. A method for selling, by an agent, articles each having a selling price determined
in accordance with at least a manufacturing cost and added value, said method
comprising the steps of:

purchasing said articles at said manufacturing price, storing the purchase price,
and keeping said articles in stock; and

paying, after selling each of the articles in stock, a consideration corresponding to the added value, to a creator of the added value.

23. A computer-readable recording medium containing a program to be executed by a computer as a server managing the sale of articles each having a selling price determined in accordance with at least a manufacturing cost and added value, said computer-readable recording medium, wherein said program comprises the steps of:

receiving order information including at least article-identification information and the number of articles to be purchased;

- 10 determining, after receiving said order information, a consideration to be paid to a creator of the added value in accordance with the contents of the order information; and

transmitting, to a computer at a site of the added value creator, consideration information including at least the consideration to be paid to a creator of the added value.

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24. A program to be executed by a server for managing the sale of articles each having a selling price determined in accordance with at least a manufacturing cost and added value, wherein said program allows a computer as said server to execute the steps of:

- 20 receiving order information including at least article-identification information and the number of articles to be purchased;

determining, after receiving said order information, a consideration to be paid to a creator of the added value in accordance with the contents of the order information; and

transmitting, to a computer at a site of the added value creator, consideration

information including at least the consideration to be paid to the added value creator.

25. A sales management system for articles each having a selling price determined in accordance with at least an article manufacturing cost and the added value thereof, said

5 sales management system comprising:

a receiver unit for receiving an article manufacturing cost and the number of articles manufactured which are inputted;

a storage unit for storing the inputted manufacturing cost and number of articles manufactured;

10 an order-accepting unit for accepting an order by receiving at least identification information of an ordered article and the number of articles;

a stock-article calculation unit for calculating the number of articles in stock at a specific time from the number of the manufactured articles stored in said storage unit and the number of ordered articles received by said order-accepting unit; and

15 a stock balance calculation unit for calculating a balance of stock at the specific time based on the calculated number of articles in stock and the manufacturing cost stored in said storage unit,

wherein the balance of stock calculated by said stock balance calculation unit does not include at least a consideration corresponding to the added value.

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26. A sales management system according to claim 25, further comprising:

a consideration-calculation unit which calculates the amount of a consideration in accordance with the number of the ordered articles from information on the consideration corresponding to the added value and the number of the ordered articles

received by said order-accepting unit; and

an output unit which transmits, to a computer of the added value creator, information which includes the amount of the consideration calculated by said consideration-calculation unit.

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27. A sales management system according to claim 26, further comprising:

a unit for calculating, based on the purchase cost of said articles, the amount of a consideration to be paid by the added value creator;

an output unit for transmitting, to a computer of a person receiving the
10 consideration, information including the calculated amount of the consideration to be paid by the added value creator;

a unit for calculating the amount to be paid to the added value creator from the calculated amount of the consideration to be paid by the added value creator, the manufacturing cost stored in said storage unit, and the purchase cost; and

15 an output unit for transmitting, to a computer of the added value creator, information including the calculated amount of the consideration to be paid to the added value creator.

28. A sales management system according to claim 27, further comprising:

20 a unit for calculating the amount of a consideration corresponding to added value per article from at least the purchase price of said articles, and the manufacturing cost stored in said storage unit;

a unit for calculating the amount of a consideration in accordance with the number of ordered articles from the amount of the consideration per article, calculated

by said calculating unit, and the number of ordered articles received by said order-
accepting unit; and

an output unit for transmitting the amount of the consideration, calculated by said
consideration-amount calculating unit, in accordance with the number of ordered articles

5 to a computer of the added value creator.

29. A sales management system for articles each having a selling price determined in
accordance with at least an article manufacturing cost and an added value thereof, said
sales management system having a first and a second servers wherein said first and

10 second servers are connected to each other via a network, wherein

said first server has:

an order accepting unit for accepting an order by receiving at least an
article identification information and the number of ordered articles from an outside
source;

15 an order placing unit for outputting order information to a computer for an
added value creator of the ordered articles after said order accepting unit accepts the
order; and

a shipping processing unit for transmitting, to a computer of a distributor
and the second server, shipping information so as to instruct the distributor to ship the
20 ordered articles after the ordered articles in accordance with the order information
outputted by the order accepting unit, are received; and

said second server has:

a receiver unit for receiving said shipping information transmitted from
said first server;

a sales processing unit for processing sales of said articles in accordance with the shipping information received by said receiver unit;

a consideration determination unit which determines, in accordance with the shipping information received by said receiver unit, the amount of consideration,
5 corresponding to the added value, which is to be paid to said added value creator; and

a transmitter unit for transmitting, to the computer of said added value creator via the network, information on the consideration, corresponding to the added value, determined by said consideration determination unit, and the number of ordered articles accepted by said order accepting unit.

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30. A sales management system according to claim 29, further comprising an output unit for transmitting, to the computer of said added value creator, information including the consideration determined by said consideration determination unit.

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31. A sales management system according to claim 30, further comprising an output unit for transmitting, to the computer of said added value creator, information including the consideration determined by said consideration determination unit.

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32. A sales management system according to claim 31, further comprising:

a storage unit for storing an article identification information and information on purchase price of said article by associating with each other;

a unit for determining the amount of a consideration to be paid by the added value creator, based on information on the purchase price acquired from said storage unit by means of corresponding to said article identification information accepted by said

order accepting unit; and

an output unit for transmitting, to a computer of said added value creator,
information including the consideration amount corresponding to said added value and
the consideration amount determined by said unit for determining the amount of a
5 consideration to be paid by the added value creator.

33. A sales management system according to claim 32, further comprising:

a storage unit for storing an article identification information and information on
purchase price of said article by associating with each other;

10 a unit for determining the amount of a consideration to be paid by the added
value creator, based on information on the purchase price acquired from said storage unit
by means of corresponding to said article identification information accepted by said
order accepting unit; and

an output unit for transmitting, to a computer of said added value creator,
15 information including the consideration amount corresponding to said added value and
the consideration amount determined by said unit for determining the amount of a
consideration to be paid by the added value creator.

34. A computer-implemented method for managing the sale of an article from a
20 product distributor, the method comprising:

receiving payment corresponding to a selling price for the article, the payment
being received by a distributor of the article from a buyer of the article;

determining a royalty due to a licensor of the article, based on the selling price of
the article;

transmitting, from the distributor to a manufacturer of the article, portions of the selling price payment corresponding to a royalty and a licensee margin portion of the selling price, wherein the manufacturer is a licensee of the article; and

transmitting, from the licensee to the licensor, payment corresponding to the
5 royalty, upon a sale the article to the customer.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein the article is a computer program affixed to a computer readable medium, and wherein the royalty is a format royalty.

10 36. The method of claim 35 wherein the licensee is a publisher of the computer program and the licensor is an author of the computer program.

37. The method of claim 36 wherein the licensee is a publisher of the computer program and the licensor is a format holder associated with the medium upon which the
15 computer program is affixed.

38. The method of claim 36 wherein the royalty portion is determined in relation to the cost price, the cost price comprising a manufacturing cost of the article, the format royalty, and the licensee margin.

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39. The method of claim 38 further comprising the steps of:

receiving an article manufacturing cost and a manufactured article quantity,
wherein the selling price is determined in relation to the manufacturing cost and an added value including the format royalty;

accepting an order by the customer by receiving ordered article identification information and the manufactured article quantity;

determining a stocked article quantity in relation to the manufactured article quantity and an ordered article quantity; and

5 determining a balance of stock in relation to the determined stocked article quantity and the manufacturing cost, wherein the balance of stock is not determined in relation to a consideration corresponding to the added value.

40. A server computer coupled to a network, and configured to manage the sale of an article from a product distributor, the server computer comprising:

means for receiving payment corresponding to a selling price for the article, the payment being received by a distributor of the article from a buyer of the article;

means for determining a royalty due to a licensor of the article, based on the selling price of the article;

15 means for transmitting, from the distributor to a manufacturer of the article, a portion of the selling price payment corresponding to a licensee margin portion of the selling price, wherein the manufacturer is a licensee of the article; and

means for transmitting, from the distributor to the licensor, a portion of the selling price payment corresponding to the royalty upon a sale the article to the customer.

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41. The server computer of claim 7 wherein the article is a computer program affixed to a computer readable medium, and wherein the royalty is a format royalty.

42. The server computer of claim 41 wherein the licensee is a publisher of the

computer program and the licensor is an author of the computer program.

43. The server computer of claim 41 wherein the licensee is a publisher of the computer program and the licensor is a format holder associated with the medium upon
5 which the computer program is affixed.

44. The server computer of claim 43 wherein the royalty portion is determined in relation to the cost price, the cost price comprising a manufacturing cost of the article the format royalty, and the licensee margin.
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45. The server computer of claim 44 further comprising:
means for receiving an article manufacturing cost and a manufactured article quantity, wherein the selling price is determined in relation to the manufacturing cost and an added value including the format royalty;
15 means for accepting an order by the customer by receiving ordered article identification information and the manufactured article quantity;
means for determining a stocked article quantity in relation to the manufactured article quantity and an ordered article quantity; and
means for determining a balance of stock in relation to the determined stocked
20 article quantity and the manufacturing cost, wherein the balance of stock is not determined in relation to a consideration corresponding to the added value.

46. A system for managing the distribution of an article from a distributor to one or more customers, the system comprising:

a licensor who is authorized to make and sell the article and grant production and sales rights to third party entities in exchange for a royalty;

a distributor including one or more locations adapted to warehouse and deliver the articles, and an electronic commerce server configured to store information regarding the identity of the article, a cost price associated with the article, and a selling price associated with the article;

a licensee who is authorized by the licensor to manufacture the product in exchange for the royalty, wherein the licensee, licensor, and distributor are connected by a computer network and wherein royalty payments are made to the licensee upon sale of the article by the distributor to a customer.

47. The system of claim 46 wherein the royalty is determined in relation to the article selling price, the selling price comprising a manufacturing cost of the article, one or more value added cost components, and a distributor cost margin.

48. The system of claim 47 wherein the royalty is determined in relation to the article cost price, the cost price comprising a manufacturing cost for the article and one or more value added cost components.

49. The system of claim 48 wherein the distributor pays a portion of the selling price corresponding to the royalty and licensee margin to the licensee, and the licensee pays a portion of the selling price corresponding to the royalty to the licensor.

50. The system of claim 49 wherein the distributor pays a portion of the selling price

corresponding to the royalty to the licensor and the distributor pays a portion of the selling price corresponding to the licensee margin to the licensee.

51. The system of claim 50 wherein the article is a computer program affixed to a computer readable medium, and wherein the royalty is a format royalty, and wherein the licensee is a publisher of the computer program and the licensor is an author of the computer program.

52. The system of claim 51 wherein the licensee is a publisher of the computer program and the licensor is a format holder associated with the medium upon which the computer program is affixed.